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REMARKS

The claims have been amended to delete all multiple dependencies, and to generally place the claims in better form for US practice.

Attached is the search report of the corresponding PCT application, together with copies of the references cited therein, which are listed on the attached Form PTO-1449.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX

IN THE CLAIMS:

Page 46, line 1: [CLAIMS] WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

3. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 1 [or 2], in which the one or more needles are made of a material selected from the group consisting of: titanium, platinum, a compound of titanium and platinum, silver, stainless steel, brass, nickel, and an alloy of these materials.

5. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 1 to 4] claim 1, in which each emitter end (40.2) is covered in a film of gold.

6. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 1 to 5] claim 1, in which the composite material has a glass content lying in the range 50% to 90% by weight relative to the total weight of the material.

7. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 1 to 6] claim 1, in which the composite material also includes mica.

8. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 1 to 7] claim 1, in which each needle (40) is held firmly in the sheath (42) which surrounds it without any possibility of rubbing or displacement.

9. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 1 to 8] claim 1, in which the means for applying a voltage

between two portions of the shank of each needle comprise first and second plates (44, 46) situated at two different heights along each sheath of composite material, and means (70, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80) for applying a high voltage between said two plates.

13. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 11 [or 12], in which the high voltage source is made using surface mount components (SMCs).

14. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 1 to 13] claim 1, having a plurality of needles, each needle being surrounded by a sheath, the sheaths being interconnected in pairs.

17. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 1 to 16] claim 1, in which the apparatus is incorporated in a housing (51) made of plastics material.

19. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 17 [or 18], in which the plastics material has resistivity lying in the range 10^4 Ω.m to $10^{12}\Omega$.m.

20. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 17 to 19] claim 17, in which the inside of the housing is treated with antistatic paint.

21. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 17 to 19] claim 17, in which the material constituting the housing is treated with additives implanting antistatic

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properties thereto.

22. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 17 to 21] claim 17, in which the housing comprises two shells with screw wells (56).

24. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 1 to 23] claim 1, further including regulator means (82, 94) for regulating the voltage applied between the two portions of the shank of each needle.

27. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 24 [or 25], in which the means for varying the applied voltage are automatic means or manual means.

28. (Amended) Apparatus according to [any one of claims 24 to 27] claim 25, including an ion detector, itself comprising:

- means (112) for sensing ions or a quantity of ions in an atmosphere;

- indicator means (114, 122) for indicating the presence of ions; and

- switch means (100-110) for switching the indicator means as a function of the quantity of ions sensed by the ion sensor means (112).

37. (Amended) A method of vacuum-packaging foodstuffs, the method comprising the following steps:

- producing one or more negative oxygen ion fluxes by

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means of apparatus according to [any one of claims 1 to 29] claim 1;

- subjecting the foodstuffs for packaging to said ion flux; [an] and

- vacuum-packaging the foodstuffs.

38. (Amended) A method of storing foodstuffs in which the foodstuffs are placed in premises fitted with ionizer apparatus according to [any one of claims 1 to 29] claim 1, and in which a flux of negative ions is produced by means of said ionizer apparatus.

40. (Amended) A method of treating the atmosphere in premises, in which use is made of apparatus according to [any one of claims 1 to 29] claim 1.

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